



Missions for
America
Semper vigilans!
Semper volans!

The Coastwatcher

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03 April, 2018

6-8 APR-NER Cadet Competition
07 APR-CTWG TRANEX
10 APR-TRCS Meeting
17 APR-TRCS Meeting
18 APR-State Capitol Tour
21 APR-Rocket Building (0900-1400)
24 APR-TRCS Meeting
28-29 APR-Corporate Leadership Course
07 MAY-Special Wing Exercise (USAF)
19 MAY-Commander's Cup Rocket Contest
09 JUN-Connecticut Aviation Day
19 AUG-Groton Airport Day
22 SEP-Preston Scarecrow Festival
29 SEP-Glider Flights-Springfield, Vt.
06 OCT-Groton Fall Festival

CADET MEETING

03 April, 2018

The customary drill, pledge, oath, inspection, and GES testing opened the meeting.

Lt Col Rocketto supervised a continuation of the rocket building program.



SENIOR MEETING

03 April, 2018

Lt Pineau briefed the officers on the recent aircraft maintenance meeting.

Maj Neilson led a discussion about the requirements for the upcoming TRANEX.

ACHIEVEMENTS

C/Col Michael S. Hollingsworth has been accepted for the class of 2022 at the United States Military Academy, West Point, N.Y.

AVIATION HISTORY

The First Flight Over Mount Everest

Part II

by

Stephen M. Rocketto

Recap

Part I described how a remarkable group of British, mostly Scots, conceived of and planned the first airplane flight over the summit of Mount Everest. This entry will detail the mounting of the expedition, the flights themselves, and the interlocking lives of the principal players.

The Aircraft

Two aircraft were selected for the flight. Both were built by Westland Aircraft as torpedo bombers. The prime aircraft was the PV-6 prototype, registered as G-ACBR and named the Houston-Wallace.



The other was a PV-3, G-ACAZ, the Westland Wallace. The engines were the highly supercharged Bristol Pegasus IS-3 developing 680 HP. Modifications included enclosing the rear cockpits and installing oxygen and heating equipment.



Vertical mapping, cinema, and still cameras were used. Modifications had to be made to all of them due to the extreme cold at altitude. The mechanisms were insulated and electrically heated as were the lenses.

Preparations completed, the Houston-Everest Expedition, as it was now known, departed for India. The Westlands were crated, loaded aboard the *S.S. Dolgama* and delivered to India by sea. They were reassembled in Karachi and flown in stages to the base camp at Purnea, some 200 miles north of Calcutta.

Some of the expedition members departed from Heston Airport and flew a formation of three Dehavillands to India: Fellowes in a Puss Moth, Clydesdale in his Tiger Moth, and McIntyre in a Fox Moth. The aircraft would be used for

reconnaissance and transport.



The principal members of the Houston-Everest Expedition are interviewed in front of Fellowes Fox Moth



*The Members of the Expedition
L/AC Faser, Clark, Cpl. Bradley, Read, Flt. Sgt. Greenwood, S. Gupta, Hughes, Shepherd, Bennett, Hensley, Burnard, Pitt, Connachie, Sweeny, Young, Barkas, Etherton, Clydesdale, Fellowes, Blacker McIntyre, Bonnett, Ellison, and Fisher.*

The Everest Flights

Daily aerial reconnaissance flights were flown to ascertain haze, winds aloft, and turbulence. The Dehavillands proved useful for these tasks.



Expedition leader Peregrine Fellowes discussing the weather conditions with Mr S. Gupta, meteorological office at Purnea, on the morning of the flight.



Fueling-Note that the fuel is contained in drums and a hand pump is used to transfer the contents.



Clydesdale and Blacker Preparing to Depart

The crews donned their electrically heated suits and goggles. The first attempt departed Purnea at 8 A.M. on April 3rd, 1933. Course 342° magnetic, distance, 160 miles. Hamilton flew the PV-3 with Blacker as observer-cameraman. McIntyre followed in the PV-3 with Bonnett, the cameraman. Precise flight was necessary, maintaining a level attitude and correcting for drift, in order to insure that the vertical mapping cameras obtained valid overlapping images.



Approaching Everest and its Plume of Snow

As they approached Everest, powerful updrafts and downdrafts were encountered. The photographers struggled to operate the equipment, removing and inserting photographic plates and

cinema film as necessary. Bonnett broke his oxygen line but managed a repair. Blacker's oxygen mask froze but they soldiered on.

Fifteen minutes were spent over the summit with passes as low as 100 feet before the aircraft turned southward, short of oxygen and uncertain about the fuel needed due to unexpected winds.



*Slightly above the summit.
April 19 1933*

Upon landing, the film was developed and they found that the vertical mapping photographs were unusable due to the dust haze over the lower mountains. A second flight was needed and flown on April 19th. Blacker remarked that the flight had to follow a dog-leg course due to the "immense westerly wind which sweeps along at those great heights," perhaps the first observation of the jet stream. The mapping photographs acquired proved satisfactory and the expedition returned to Calcutta and a bureaucratic nightmare.

As Blacker relates "...someone in Lady Houston's entourage had persuaded her that their second flight was an infraction of her wishes based upon the idea that our pilots must not be exposed to unnecessary risk." Their funds were frozen and they could not satisfy insurance requirements or meet their financial obligations." Blacker contacted Willie Graham, Lady Houston's solicitor and used an army regulation inspired by Wellington to get the funds released.

According to the regulations, a formal precise order must be observed of the issuer of the order is present. But if the issuer is not present and circumstances demand a change, the recipient of the order is not only permitted to depart for the

original instructions but is mandated to do so. Anything less and the army holds him accountable. Graham bought the argument and Lady Houston not only forgave the expedition leadership but sent them a large box of cigars as an apology.

The expedition films not only increased the sum total of geographical knowledge but also proved useful to successive expeditions which attempted to climb to the summit of what the Nepalese call "Goddess Mother of the World."

The Oscar Winning Documentary

A 1934 documentary film about this flight won an Oscar in the United States. "Wings Over Everest" was co-directed by Geoffrey Barkas and Ivor Montagu. The film used original footage from the flights and staged scenes. The staged scenes used the actual characters associated with the expedition, not actors? In 1936, the film the Academy Award as the "Best Short Subject (Novelty)" entry. "Wings Over Everest" can be viewed in its entirety at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9zK4WblHxkl>

How Did Our Cast of Characters Fare Post Everest

Stewart Blacker was promoted to colonel and later established himself as an inventor of armaments, notably the PIAT (Projector Infantry Anti-Tank) and the Hedgehog, an anti-submarine weapon, both important in World War II.

In 1940, Deputy Führer of the Nazi Party **Rudolph Hess** developed the idea that he could act as agent to negotiate a peace with Great Britain. He considered Clydesdale, now the Duke of Hamilton as his contact since he wrongly believed that Hamilton was the leader of a party opposed to war with Germany. Hess knew about Hitler's plan to invade Russia and feared a war on two fronts.

On 10 May, 1941, 18 months after the

commencement of hostilities, Hess checked out an Me-110 which had been personally assigned to him and departed Germany heading to Dungeval House, Hamilton's home in Scotland. He was unable to find Dungeval House and bailed out when his fuel was exhausted. He landed 12 miles short of his intended destination, was captured and requested to meet with Hamilton.

The next morning, Hamilton, the Wing Commander at nearby RAF Turnhouse met with Hess who revealed his true identity and the purpose of his mission. After Hamilton consulted with Churchill, Hess and Hamilton then met with Ivone Kirkpatrick, a foreign affairs specialist, and revealed Hitler's plan of conquest. Hess's peace plan entailed allowing Hitler free rein in Europe while allowing Great Britain immunity and continued possession of her colonial empire.

Interrogation continued and Hess, realizing his mission had failed, attempt to kill himself. The attempt as suicide was a failure. A second attempt also failed. Tried at Nuremberg, he was sentenced to life imprisonment at Spandau where in 1987, he hanged himself. Practice makes perfect.

Hamilton, Marquis of Clydesdale became 14th Duke of Hamilton. He partnered with fellow Everest pilot **McIntyre** to develop a flight school at Prestwick Airport. Eventually, the founded Scottish Aviation and manufactured a number of interesting aircraft. Everest reserve pilot **C.W. Ellison** became their chief test pilot and general manager.

John Buchan was made First Baron Tweedmuir. He continued his career as a novelist, historian, biographer, and poet producing around 100 different titles. In 1935, The 39 Steps was made into a well-received movie directed by Alfred Hitchcock. That same year, he was appointed the 15th Governor General of Canada.

Lucy, Lady Houston, the financier of the expedition, continued her quarrel with the labour government and supported a wide range of charities. In 1936, Edward VII abdicated to marry the American divorcee, Wallis Simpson. Lady

Houston was so distraught that she stopped eating and died of a heart attack.

Percy Thomas Etherton continued to travel and write books, mostly about central Asia. He predicted a future crisis with the Japanese Empire

William Francis Forbes-Semphill, 19th Lord Semphill and Baronet of Craigever, turns out to be the black sheep of the Everest Committee. A well-known aviator, he served as president of the Royal Aeronautical Society from 1927-1930.

He worked closely with the Japanese Imperial Navy to develop their aviation capabilities. Starting in the 1920's he began giving military secrets to the Japanese. These activities were known but by British counter-intelligence decided to act rather than embarrass the aristocracy and more important, reveal that they were reading the Japanese codes.

Semphill favored right wing militaristic governments, was an anti-Semite, and was active in pro-Nazi organizations. In 1941, two days before the Japanese attacked the British and Americans, it was discovered that he was in contact with the Japanese embassy and was in possession of a number of secret documents. Deeply in debt, to the tune of about a million dollars, Semphill was asked to resign from the Royal Navy and again, not prosecuted.

During the 1950's he was president of the British Gliding Association, the UK equivalent of our Soaring Association of America.

In 1961, Japan awarded him the 3rd Class of the Order of the Rising Sun!

Thirty five years after his death in 1965 information about his pre-war and wartime spying was released. Amazingly, the National Archive file concluded that Semphill actions "...were motivated less by any desire to help the enemy or to make money than by his own impetuous character, obstinacy, and flawed judgement."

Semphill is a major figure in the 2012 BBC documentary, *The Fall of Singapore: The Great Betrayal*. Another British aviation hero, Frederick Rutland, aviator hero at the Battle of Jutland, also collaborated with the Japanese. In the end, Rutland was imprisoned and committed suicide. Semphill was allowed to resign without public censure. A sarcastic commentator noted that "Semphill was a peer and Rutland wasn't."

And what about Downton Abbey. Air Commodore **Peregrine Forbes Morant Fellowes** is the great uncle to Julian Fellowes, the author of Downton Abbey.

Sidney Bonnet became a noted war correspondent/photographer. But his films of the Everest Expedition were used to make a documentary which was the first documentary to win an Oscar.

The director, **Geoffrey Barkas** went on to lead the British Middle East Command Camouflage Directorate during the Second World War. His major success was "Operation Bertram" in which his unit used a wide variety of techniques to deceive Rommel before the Battle of El Alamein.

Barkas' co-director **Ivor Montagu** was a communist, film critic and a really interesting figure in his own right. He edited or helped produce many of Alfred Hitchcock's early films and was a champion table tennis player who served as the first chairman of the International Table Tennis Federation.

AEROSPACE CHRONOLOGY

April 4, 2012– Lacking both experience and a checklist, a military contractor based in the Seychelles launched a remote controlled USAF MQ-9 Reaper without permission. One minute after take-off, he accidentally shuts down the engine, attempts and attempts an emergency landing but forgets to lower the landing gear. The Reaper bounces off the runway and into the Indian Ocean.



*Reap What Ye Shall
Sow!
MQ-9 Fished out of
the Indian Ocean.*
(Credit: Le Seychellois Hebdo)

April 5, 1976—Howard Hughes goes West while aboard a Learjet heading north. Hughes was a medical patient being flown from Acapulco to Houston.

It would be a gross understatement that Hughes was eccentric give his careers in industry, film, real estate and his bizarre later life. But his involvement in aviation is worth some column space in *The Coastwatcher*.

Moye Stephens, mentioned last week in Part One of “The First Flight Over Mount Everest” taught him to fly. Backed by the enormous financial resources of his industrial empire, he worked on the designs and flew a number of notable airplanes. He set both closed course and transcontinental records with his H-1.



*Hughes and his record
setting H-1*

In 1938, he took a Lockheed 14 Super Electra around the world, breaking Wiley Post's old record by four days.

*Spectators mob Floyd
Bennett Field after
Hughes's record
circumnavigation.*

(Credit: Beckmann-Getty Archives)



He is credited with influencing the design and construction of the Boeing 307 Stratoliner, the first pressurized airliner, and the highly graceful and highly successful Lockheed Constellation.

His wooden H-4 flying boat was at one time the largest aircraft in the world.



*Hughes in his
customary fedora
at the controls of
the H-4.*

(Credit: Bettmann/Corbis Archives)

Hughes was regarded known as a daring but lackadaisical pilot. He crashed four times, once killing a government inspector and a company employee. His near fatal crash test flying the XF-11 left him near death and with recurrent life-long medical problems.



*Hughes at the
controls of the
radical XF-11*
(Credit: UNLV)

Heavily involved in airlines and the aircraft industry, Hughes, at one time or another, owned three airlines: Trans World Airlines, Northeast Airlines, and Hughes Airwest. He also owned Hughes Aerospace, a pioneer corporation in helicopters and aviation electronics.

It is fitting that Howard Hughes died in flight aboard a Learjet.

April 6, 1994 – The President of Rwanda, Juvénal Habyarimana, and the President of Burundi, Cyprien Ntaryamira are assassinated when their Dassault Falcon 50 is hit by an SA-16 surface-to-air missile while attempting to land at Kigali International Airport at Kigali, Rwanda.



*Rwandan “Air
Force One” Before
Shoot-down.*

Ten others die in the shoot-down. The alleged perpetrators and the usual suspects, the Rwandan Patriotic Front, Huto Power extremists, Tutsi rebels, or henchmen of Paul Kagame who eventually became President.

April 7, 1941, - The Douglas Havoc I entered service as a night fighter with No. 85 Squadron, RAF. Two days later, the the squadron claimed its first confirmed victory.

No. 85 Squadron Havoc

Note the radar antenna and flame dampeners.

(Credit: Imperial War Museum)



The Havoc is a little known but very interesting WWII aircraft. Originally, the Douglas DB-7, she saw wartime service with the Soviet Union, United States, Britain, Commonwealth nations, Vichy French, Free French, and Dutch. The British bomber versions were called Bostons. The U.S. designated them as the A-20 Havoc and the night fighter version as the P-70. The photo-reconnaissance version was the F-3.

The aircraft has a single pilot and a navigator-bombardier and radioman-gunner. Most of the 7,500 produced went on lend-lease to Russia.

April 9, 1959 – Mercury program – NASA announces the selection of the United States’ first seven astronauts, the “Mercury Seven.”



The “Mercury Seven” After Survival Training at Stead AFB.

L-R: Gordon Cooper, M. Scott Carpenter, John Glenn, Alan Shepard, Virgil I. Grissom, Walter

Schirra and Donald K. Slayton.

(Credit: NASA)

April 10, 2010 – Another bad day for a national leader. The President of Poland, Lech Aleksander Kaczyński, and 95 others died when a Polish Tu-154M crashes on approach to Smolensk Airport, Russian.

Polish “Air Force One” Before Fatal Crash

(Credit: Dmitry Karpezo)



The delegation was on their way to attend a memorial service for the 70th anniversary of the Katyn Massacre. (In 1940, the Soviets held mass executions in which some 22,000 members of the Polish intelligentsia, military, police, and government were murdered in an attempt to decapitate the Polish leadership and secure control of Poland.)

April 11, 1943 – Frank Piasecki flies his PV-2 helicopter, the second successful helicopter to fly in the United States. The PV-2 was a “Frankenstein” aircraft constructed from the fuselage of a Curtiss-Wright Junior found abandoned at a brewery, a clutch from a rusted Chevy, a junkyard oil pump, and metal previously used as roofing tin.

Piasecki Tips His Hat to the Spectators

(Courtesy of Boeing)



Records indicate that Piasecki was the first person granted a certificate to fly a helicopter without previously qualified in a conventional aircraft. His company went on to produce a line of notable helicopters such as the “flying banana” tandem rotor machines which led to the CH-47 Chinook. In 1956, the company name was changed to Vertol and four years later, sold to Boeing.